

THE LEISURE HOUR

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND,"—*Corpor.*



A YOUNG POACHER BEFORE THE JUSTICES.

STORY OF THE CROOKED SIXPENCE.

CHAPTER XII.—FIRM AND FAITHFUL.

My acquaintance with the young Australian colonist was for that time suddenly brought to a close; for, on taking his seat in the post carriage which was to convey him to his early home, I passed from his hand to that of a stable-helper who had assisted in harnessing the horses.

No. 460.—OCTOBER 13, 1880.

Such mutations are part and parcel of my existence, and I have ever borne them with equanimity, else might I have regretted and bewailed the unhappy chance which separated me from my generous-minded possessor at so interesting a crisis of his history. As it was, I contentedly yielded to my destiny, and, accompanying my new owner to his home, I was given, with the rest of his day's earnings, to the care of his sickly wife.

U U

PRICE ONE PENNY.

And here I could enlarge on the gentleness and patience with which a rough and rugged toiler in one of the low and despised ranks of life, treated her who was the partner of his cares and struggles.

She was not a happy woman—that stable-helper's wife; and she was not comely to look upon, for painful lingering disease had wasted her frame and destroyed what native charms she might once have possessed, while constant fretfulness had stamped her countenance with gloom. Yet did her husband watch over her with undiminished affection; he remembered the days of their mutual youth, and their many years companionship; and so he bore with her weaknesses and listened with tender sympathy to her fretful complaints. I might dwell upon this as a pleasant and instructive theme; but I must hasten on.

A few weeks passed away, and I had served many masters, when, one fine morning, I found myself in the leathern purse of a diminutive youth, whose peculiar garb denoted a close acquaintance with the saddle. He was standing in the stable yard of the Crown and Sceptre; and he was contemplating, with such pleasurable excitement as may stir within a postilion's bosom, the excursion on which he was bound.

"Very spruce to-day, Joe," said a loungee, looking down upon my little owner, and glancing significantly at his black velvet jockey cap with gilded tassel, his many-buttoned tight-fitting jacket of light blue, his yellow buckskin continuations, and his brilliantly-black jockey boots armed with silver spurs: "very spruce to-day, Joe Wimssett."

"I should think so," responded my diminutive owner; "we don't have a white job every day."

"A white job! What's a white job, Joe?"

"A wedding, to be sure," said Joe, turning on his heel, and whispering audibly to another small piece of humanity, similarly accoutred with himself, "How precious green!"

Off in a few minutes, over hill and dale, with empty carriages behind them, rode my owner and his companion, smacking their heavy-thonged whips at whiles, until suddenly they drew up at the gate of a quaint old cottage residence, in a quiet village hard by an ancient church with its green mounded yard. It was a gala day in that village, evidently; for the church bells were ringing merrily, and the arrival of the equipage was the signal for joyous shouts from lusty lungs of assembled villagers.

Then came out baskets of white favours for post-boys' breasts—pinned on by laughing, blushing maidens—and for horses' heads. Then came out refreshing liquor, bright and red and sparkling, for post-boys' dry and ever ready throats. Then came a few minutes of waiting. And then came out a middle-aged gentleman in grave attire, with a middle-aged lady lightly leaning on his arm; and then a younger man, gaily appa'elled, as became the friend of the bridegroom; and then the bridegroom himself, with "huzzas!" shouted by the lusty-limbed lookers-on, as they threw up their caps, and huzzaed again; for in the broad-chested, black-bearded, and bronzed, honest, generous countenance of the bridegroom, there was no difficulty in recognising my once and not long-past owner.

Huzza again and again. Firm and fond and faithful heart had won fair lady.

Down went carriage steps; in stepped the vicar of Ashly and the vicar's wife; in sprang (in the second carriage) bridegroom and friend; crack sounded post-boys' whips; round whirled carriage wheels; merrily rang church bells: then another village was in sight, and another village church; and other carriages drove up; and—

Yes, and there at the church-yard gate stood broad-faced farmer, in bright blue broad-cloth, ample-skirted, bright-buttoned coat, and buff-coloured vest, with a white rose in button hole; and there stood tall pale lawyer's clerk, chewing the cud of unfulfilled and never-to-be fulfilled prediction in his thoughts, and a sprig of rosemary in his mouth.

"Only to think, now," said farmer, "that the chap we travelled with all the way down, was Mr. Lionel himself—Miss Lucy's husband as was to be!" and he nudged clerk's elbow, while his face beamed delight.

"Oh, you are here too, Mr. Grange!" said clerk, looking round, and offering his hand, which farmer shook so heartily and closed upon with such a grip that he winced again.

"Here! I should think so. Always said I'd see Miss Lucy married. Didn't I know her when she wasn't higher than a table? and her mother too? and isn't she the brightest, sweetest tempered, loveliest lass in all the country round? Here! I should think so. And where's your farthing cake, mister? and where's your captain that was so sure of Miss Lucy? Ha, ha!" and broad-faced farmer Grange laughed merrily.

"Well, well; 'tis all right; any way it brings work to our office," said clerk; "so 'tis all right."

"And Captain's paid off, isn't he?"

"Yes, yes, all his legal demands; no doubt."

"And Squire Gilbert is going along with Miss Lucy (who won't be Miss Lucy much longer) and with Mr. Lionel to Australia, eh?"

"So I understand, Mr. Grange; but if you want to see the ceremony—"

So they went into the church, and others followed; and in half an hour

At this point the poor clerk's hand appears to have trembled so exceedingly that his manuscript is scarcely decipherable. A few words only may be made out, such as—"lovely simplicity," as referring, probably, to the bride;—"present and future happiness," doubtless an invocation on the newly married pair;—"joyful event;"—"bells;"—and one or two other disconnected sentences. Then follows another chapter, in which it evidently appears that sixpence has a new owner, and is thus entitled to take up the burden of the old song,

"Ban, ban, Caliban,
Have a new master, be a new man."

CHAPTER XIII.—SIXPENCE IS PROMOTED TO THE MAGISTERIAL BENCH.

AFTER many mutations, I became for a short time the property of a very important personage indeed—he being none other than a justice of the peace; in other words, a county magistrate.

By what means I came into this gentleman's pocket, where I lay loose, and rested for a while, with a variety of curious matters, among which I remember was a pocket corkscrew, a tobacco-stopper, a dog-whistle, a hank of whipcord, a curious implement of farriery, and a hunting-knife, all indicative of my owner's tastes and pursuits; I say, by what means I became thus honoured, it is not necessary to recall: it is enough that I accompanied the country squire to his home, and became, for a week or two, part and parcel of his existence.

Shall I confess that, if I had not been sustained by a sense of inherent and sterling worth, I might have been abashed by my owner's high estimation of himself and of his moral weight and importance in society. He was a large man, with a loud voice and an obstinate, positive temper. He lived in a large house, and he had a large estate; he kept up a large establishment, and his stables would have been thought too luxurious by far as dwellings for his peasantry. Horses, in his estimation, were the nobler animal, and required the greater care and better lodgment. He used big-words, moreover, and sometimes uttered great oaths, which perhaps he would have deemed very immoral in others not so big as himself; for there are some men who think either that the Almighty will not deal out equal justice to them with others, for the transgressions of his holy law, or that, at all events, they can buy remission of sin by deeds of ostentatious almsgiving. Therefore was my new owner, among other largenesses, a large subscriber to hospitals and alms-houses, and divers other modes of purchasing a good name among men; "for," said he, in his secret soul, "charity covereth a multitude of sins;" which doubtless it does: yet not in the sense ignorantly proposed by himself.

My new master was also, as I have hinted, a mighty hunter and sportsman, and little mercy had he for any who unlawfully indulged in the pursuit or destruction of "game." And hereupon hangs a tale which I will presently give you.

But first let me speak of my owner's library, into which I was introduced on the day that I became his; for, being what he was, you understand, it was needful for one room in his house to be dignified with an intellectual title. A strange place was that same library. To be sure there was a large and ponderous book-case, and its shelves were filled with large volumes; but, save that my master sometimes condescended to pore over certain treatises on field sports and farriery, it was seldom that he cared to disturb the venerable dust which had gathered on the edges of his books; while on the walls were hung costly paintings of favourite horses and dogs, and on racks, from floor to ceiling, rested the implements of the great business of his life—guns of all sorts, from the light fowling-piece which he had carried when a boy, to the rifle with which he had unerringly laid low many a stately deer, and the heavy ducking gun for wild fowl. Moreover, the walls were adorned with antlers of stags, brushes of foxes, spurs for his horses, (for, much as he loved his horses, he did not spare the spur on occasion,) and whips for his dogs.

Do you opine, my friend, that the favourite occu-

pations and pursuits of this modern Nimrod but very little fitted him for the grave and arduous duty of dispensing justice, or even for the knowledge of the laws of which he was the appointed guardian? You may be right; but remember, you are only a poor clerk, my friend, and you are not to be expected to know how they manage these matters in —shire.

Besides, be it known to you that what my master and his fellow justices wanted in knowledge of the laws, was made up, in full tale, by the deep erudition and technical skill of their guide and assistant, the magistrate's clerk; and so, the wheels of the lumbering old car of law and justice, in which they sat in great dignity, rolled on as smoothly as might be expected, without any great casualty or fatal overturn, though it is not to be denied that it sometimes was nearly sticking fast in the mire. But in one department of the laws he had undertaken to administer, my owner was deeply read and skilfully learned: the study of the *game laws* was to him a work of love.

I have kept you long enough on the threshold, my friend; let us enter the hall of justice; that is to say, the great assembly room at the "Fox and Geese," where my owner and three or four of his colleagues, with their indispensable clerk, met monthly to adjudge appropriate penalties and pains to offenders. Fancy only a big table, with a person waiting thereat; a bright fire, for the weather was cold; four arm-chairs drawn round one end of the table in a semicircle, each occupied by a bustling country squire; a straight row of chairs, at some distance below it, serving as a prisoners' bar, to divide the culprits from their judges; a passing in and out of witnesses and constables; a few spectators, and the court of justice is before you, my friend.

Enter an unlucky urchin of some twelve or fourteen summers, in patched smock frock, and trowsers out at knees. He is "come up to be tried," says a bystander: and he seems to be quite aware of it; for his limbs shake under him, his round face is ghastly pale, and his teeth chatter with dread: he has never been in such awful presence before, and he would sink to the floor under his weight of present misery, if he were not supported by a poor woman (his mother of course) in a faded red cloak and stained weather-beaten straw bonnet, who, only a shade less alarmed than her boy, occupies herself in dropping a succession of deep curtseys, as she stares from one judicial countenance to another.

The boy is not a prisoner yet, you understand, but he has made his appearance, in obedience to a magisterial summons, to answer for a terrible crime; and the constable at the door watches over him with the fond solicitude which a spider may be supposed to exercise over a poor little fly caught in the meshes of her web, and struggling in vain to get free.

The terrible crime which this unlucky young fly—child, I mean—had committed, was as follows. He had been set by a farmer, his master, to drive rooks away from a field of corn, and had been intrusted with an old musket and a limited supply of coarse gunpowder, to assist him in this business. For a

time, the boy had blazed away with the gunpowder harmlessly; but thinking (Nimrod fashion) that it would be finer sport, and more effectual also, to kill the predacious birds than to frighten them, he had charged his weapon with small stones. At that moment, and just as he was prepared to put his sanguinary design into execution, a strange-looking bird with a long tail flew over his head. The next moment, up went the gun to his shoulder, and down sank his fore-finger to the trigger. Then there was a bang, a scream, and a flutter; and within a few yards of the unhappy young sportsman lay a mortally wounded pheasant; and while the little fellow was scratching his head in amazement at the exploit, and wondering how such a small charge of powder could kill such a great bird, up came a wrathful gamekeeper, and, after chastising the boy for his unfortunate deed, carried off the dead pheasant, and held out the comfortable assurance to the smarting and blubbering culprit that he should hear something more about it. Which he did, in the form of a summons to appear before the magisterial bench, you understand.

The examination and trial did not last long. Of course they did not. It was so very clear: the gamekeeper had witnessed the felonious deed—with his own eyes, as he said; and he had caught the young "poaching vagabond" with the gun in his hand, and the pheasant at his feet, (he did not say anything about the flogging he had given the boy, which, indeed, had nothing whatever to do with the case, as the weeping mother was informed by my owner when she pleaded it in mitigation of further punishment); moreover, the boy acknowledged the fact; he only pleaded that he was "set up" by his master to shoot birds, and he did not know that one bird was not as good as another; which plea only made the matter worse for him, for he was advised not to add impertinence to his crime; this also by my owner, who seemed to be chief justice and spokesman for the rest.

"Here's a pretty state the country is coming to," said he, when the gamekeeper had given his evidence, and the boy had further convicted himself with his own white and trembling lips, and the boy's mother had begged piteously that their honours wouldn't be hard upon her poor child; "a pretty state," he repeated, "when boys like this turn poachers in the face of day, and set law and gospel at defiance!"

"The boy is very young," interposed another magistrate, who had been sitting uneasily in his chair, and who now looked rather compassionately on the little culprit and his mother; "and perhaps he did not know——"

"Ah, they'll get your good word, I dare say, Mr. Hornbeam," said the chairman testily: "now, I say, the laws must be upheld; what's to become of our glorious constitution else? I want to know that."

"True, true, that's the point," echoed number three and number four.

"I was only about to suggest that the poor boy may really have done the thing by mistake," said Mr. Hornbeam deferentially; "and that, as he really was employed to fire off the gun—a very

improper practice, I must say—perhaps a light punishment, or even a friendly caution——"

"Friendly fee to fum!" exclaimed my owner. "A mistake, was it? He won't make such a mistake again, I warrant. A mistake! ha, ha! Mistake a cock pheasant for a rook!" and hereupon the gentleman laughed loudly, as at an exquisite joke.

"Look ye here, boy!" continued my owner, when he had consulted the other gentlemen in the arm-chairs, and the clerk below them, who sat at the table, "you must pay five pounds, or——"

Five pounds! Had all the personal property of the miserable little convict been valued at a reasonable rate, it might have been set down at five pence, perhaps. Had the poor woman in the faded red cloak, who stood wringing her hands in hopeless dismay and shedding tears copiously, been imprisoned for life in default of payment, she could not, at that moment, have tendered five shillings. Had all the relations of the boy, paternal and maternal, uncles, aunts, cousins, and so forth, been as anxious to redeem him, as he was anxious to be redeemed, five pounds would have been an impossibility—a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. So, in other words, sobbed the poor woman.

"Five pounds, or go to prison for three months," continued my owner, the chairman and spokesman in chief. "There, there, good woman, that will do," he added placidly. "It is a very light sentence, all things considered. Why, woman, I remember the time—in the good old times—when such a thing would have been a hanging matter almost;* and you ought to be grateful."

Perhaps she ought to have been grateful; but she was not. The poor never are, so you have heard say, I dare affirm, my good friend.

"Take the boy away, constable," added my master; "we have other business before us, and we cannot be hindered. Make out the committal, Mr. Pennepoint."

So the magistrate's clerk made out the committal, and the constable cleared the room for the next case.

"Ahem!" said the poor clerk to himself; "my crooked friend is rather severe; but then, it was a little too bad, of course it was. I wonder whether such things happen now-a-days. Surely not."

Thus far had the poor clerk and his crooked friend proceeded uninterruptedly for several nights. But now came an interval of some days, during which time he was absent from his home in the service of his employers. In preparation for the journey, the poor clerk left the key of his solitary apartment in the care of his landlord, by whom, on his return, he was welcomed with warm greetings.

"I don't know what I should do without you, John," said Mr. Kenedge, having three several times taken the hand of his lodger and shaken it with uncommon vigour, and having also inducted him into his little room below, and positively compelled him to take the warmest seat by the side of

* The magistrate was right in his statement. In the reign of George III, an Act was passed making it a capital crime, in other words, "a hanging matter," to destroy a rabbit in a warren. And the shooting of a pheasant, even by an ignorant boy, would have been "a hanging matter almost."

his "uncommon convenient" small stove, on which was gently simmering a savoury mess intended for their joint supper, in honour of the poor clerk's safe return. "No, I really do not know what I should do without you, John," he repeated.

"Why, it is but little we see of each other, Mr. Keenedge," said the poor clerk deprecatingly. "I am a solitary man; I might easily slip out of existence, and no one would much miss me."

"Don't talk so, John; I won't hear it," said the little barber, stirring his savoury stew with a spoon; "you haven't a right to say it, John. Nobody hasn't a right to say so; and so I told the gentleman to-day that lodges at Mrs. Brown's in — Street, when I was a-shaving him. 'I am a solitary being,' says he, 'and it doesn't much matter what becomes of me.' 'Stop, sir,' says I—I had him at an advantage just then, you see, for I was lathering round his mouth, and he couldn't well open it till I let him; 'stop, sir; you hadn't ought to say so, I think,' I said; 'you have plenty of money to do good with, and are strong and hearty; and them is talents.'"

"You told him so, Mr. Keenedge?" said the poor clerk; "well, well, you were right so far. And what did your customer say?"

"Ah," says he; "but you don't know all, Mr. Keenedge," he says: and then he goes on to tell me as how he left home years and years ago, and has been abroad all of his time till of late; and that them as he left at home have all died away, one by one; and he comes home to find nothing but graves and strangers—"graves and strangers," said he; and he groaned like, John."

The poor clerk sighed. "It is the common lot," he said softly and half musingly: "change, change; desolation, desolation. Well, well!"

"Well, well," echoed the little barber, giving a final poke with a fork into the bowels of his saucepan, and then taking up two plates which he had stood against his stove, and placing them on the small table, which was covered with a white cloth. "Well, well," said he cheerfully, "it may be so; it is so, no doubt; there's lots of changes going on everywhere, John; neighbours change and shift about, and fashions change; and you and I change, John; but that's no reason why we should always be groaning and moaning: and now the tripe's done to a bubble; and the inions are beautiful—be-au-ti-ful. Let us be thankful for tripe and inions, John."

And so saying, Mr. Keenedge bustled about cheerily, and served up his stew dexterously; and the poor clerk caught the infection and contagion of his cheerfulness, and ate, and his spirits revived within him.

"THAT may be all very true, but you'll hardly convince me that it can turn the Black Country white, or throw a halo round the pit mouth; love must assuredly end in smoke *there*."

Don't be too sure of any such thing; Vulcan himself—black gentleman—yielded to the tender passion; and, as love is said to be blind, though, in my opinion, he sees farther than most people, he may possibly be not so nice about his quarters as are our critical fellow countrymen. In order, therefore, that a sceptical or hitherto unenlightened public may no longer have an excuse for believing that no heart flames are kindled in the Land of Fire, or that Cupid's "shafts" are the only ones not found there in working order, I shall endeavour to give a strictly veracious account of Black Country marriages, as I witnessed their celebration in the parish church of L. R.

Mr. Barry was in the habit of taking "surplice duty" on alternate weeks with his curate, and on one of these occasions he invited my attendance. Two weddings were that morning to be performed, and as they were to come off at half-past nine, and the church was some little distance from the vicarage, we were obliged to be pretty sharp in our movements. As we approached the churchyard, it was evident that two of the candidates for matrimony had arrived, and were enjoying an intellectual treat among the tombstones. The lovers had separated, doubtless to enhance the felicity of coming union, and we found the bride, with her fair attendant, assiduously labouring at our old friend, "Affliction sore," which would seem to have been borne with as much stoicism and with as little relief from professional skill as in any other part of the United Kingdom. The word "physicians" proving a stumbling-block, the lady gladly obeyed a summons from her lord and master elect, to "Come along in now, Sally," and we followed her. The other couple did not arrive; and Mr. Barry, after waiting for them a few minutes, began the service.

I thought that altogether we presented a rather singular picture, clustered together in one little corner of that large and straggling edifice. The pair about to be married were very young, almost boy and girl, and their faces wore an expression of the most intense astonishment at all they were called upon to do and say. The groom's-man manifested considerable uneasiness, particularly as regarded his eyes; they were evidently in his way, or, as we say in polite society, *de trop*; but at last, having vainly sent them all over the chancel in search of a resting-place, he happily fixed on the highest pane in the east window, and stared with all his might. The bridesmaid's very much more expressive features manifested by turns alarm, astonishment, curiosity, and no end of sympathetic feelings; but no one came up, in my ideas, to the sexton, who had entered fresh from a grave, and now stood leaning against a pillar at a little distance, grimly surveying the proceedings. I learnt afterwards that this man was slightly affected in his head, and that he "studied" or moldered at times not a little. I cannot say that his looks belied him, as he stood there with his long wild hair hanging about him, and a half comical expression, which

THE BLACK COUNTRY.

CHAPTER III.—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE BLACK COUNTRY.

"For all is bright, and beauteous, and clear,
And the meanest thing most precious and dear,

When the magic of love is present;
Love, that lends a sweetness and grace
To the meanest spot and the plainest face,
That turns Wilderness Row into Paradise Place,
And Garlic Hill to Mount Pleasant!"

said, as plain as words, "*Go on; I know what it is: you're in for it now, that's all!*"

Well, everything proceeded with the utmost decorum for some time; but, as it approached the important ceremony of adorning the bride's finger, I observed that Mr. Barry perceptibly raised his voice, and, as his tones grew more distinct, his face assumed an expression of determination, not to say severity. The "wedding" and the "worshipping" happily accomplished, he went on with most emphatic deliberation: "*With all my worldly goods*"—"with all my worldly goods:" "*I thee ENDOW*"—"I thee and thou."

Mr. Barry gave me a despairing look, as much as to say, "*This is always the way, they will say it; and yet, what could have been plainer?*" He made two more experiments, and then the offending sentence was disposed of; but I am persuaded that, to the last, the bridegroom preferred his own version as by far the more comprehensible.

As they were turning away from the altar, the other couple arrived, and bustled up the aisle with no small noise and clatter. In this instance, also, the man was young, but the bride had years enough for both; she must have been considerably over fifty, but looked very sturdy and vigorous.

"You are very late," said Mr. Barry in a low voice as they drew near; "this was not the hour specified."

"It was all t' old woman," was the brisk response; "'twasn't for she, I'd have rought here soon enough."

"For shame of thee, lad; thee know'st thee lees," was the loving reply; but Mr. Barry interposed to stop any farther dialogue, by asking if they had brought any witnesses.

"Any what?" said the man.

"Any witnesses; any of your friends to bear witness to your marriage, and sign their names afterwards in the books?"

"Well, no; I reckoned two was enoo to this bargain," was his answer; at the same time giving a facetious nudge with his elbow to his beloved, who seemed greatly diverted by his pleasantry. This difficulty was overruled by a volunteering of the newly-married couple's services; but the ceremony took a long time to get through, and once or twice I thought that Mr. Barry seemed disposed to break off altogether and send them away.

It was not easy to determine whether the man became stupid or sulky, or whether he considered the occasion an appropriate one for an exhibition of his droll humour. In any case, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be induced to repeat his part with any approximation to correctness; even the simple response "*I will*" was not to be elicited till Mr. Barry had made a feint of closing the book and turning away, while "*thee and thou*" was adhered to with even fonder pertinacity than in the former instance.

Then came the signing of *marks* in the vestry; but the first Benedict was a "scollard," and his wife insisted on his writing his name like a man. He, nothing loth, complied with a flourish, and I thought the letters would never have done ascending. The *R* in Richard showed an evident dispo-

sition to leap off the line, but the last *l* in Turnbull looked down upon its predecessors from a point of dizzy elevation. The bridesmaid seeing this, became ambitious, and thought she would try her hand at "*Mary Roberts*;" but, having produced a gigantic *M*, she became nervous, and when the bridegroom (I hope he was not jealous) said, "*Wench, thee's best leave t'alone*," she gave up and humbly made her +.

An invitation to the breakfast was certainly *not* what I had calculated upon, and I was unprepared with either gloves or speech: nevertheless, on leaving the vestry, up came the man last married, and, with a sufficiently sheepish and a would-be penitent expression, gave vent to his feelings thus: "*I say, master, my old missis her says we'm sorry we kep you waiting, and won't you join we in a glass—you and this here young chap?*"

Mr. Barry's mouth twitched most spasmodically, but he answered with becoming serenity, "*Now you are not going to drink away your money at the public house? now do not, I beg of you.*"

"Not to drink away we money; but drink we health in a glass we will, or else I'll know why not."

"You'll not stop there, and you know that right well; now be persuaded, and go home, or you'll be sorry for it afterwards."

"Whoam!" said the man, with a sulky and determined look; "*I'll go whoam when I'm ready for whoam, and not till then. Come, Missis, he won't ha' none, he says:*" and the pairs moved off.

I watched them, as they wound down the hill on which the church was built; and truly it was a curious spectacle. No unseemly demonstrations, no parade of affection or transports of delight, were apparent. The two husbands moved on ahead, one behind the other, as though too full of their respective happiness to bear companionship. About ten yards in the rear appeared the ladies, wearied and warm, for the day was broiling, and their lords marched on apace. It might be presumed that, as yet, the "*moon and honey for two*" had hardly commenced, but it was a good lesson, and a timely one, upon the proper relative position of the sexes, in their after march through life. Life to these poor creatures, what would it prove? Would any of the honey remain to mingle with the daily bitterness? Would any kindly whispered "*Excelsior*" lead the grovelling earth-bound spirit to look upward, to long for something higher? As I watched these odd-y united couples, wending their way to the nearest public house, there to usher in their joint existence in revel and intoxication, it was not easy to avoid a melancholy glance into the probable future in store for them. *What* were they likely hereafter to prove to each other? *What* kind of helps-meet for the toilsome journey in prospect?

During my visit at the L. R. vicarage, I had ample opportunity afforded of passing critical judgment on the women of the Black Country; their appearance and habits, their manners, customs, and dispositions. Now, as one who entertains for the sex at large the profoundest admiration and respect, I may be pardoned for saying that the impression produced was very far indeed from favour-

able. With few exceptions, whatever personal attractions they were originally possessed of, faded away long before the period at which such feminine decay is usually anticipated, leaving them a cross-grained, hard-featured race—an uncomfortable fact, though it could scarcely be alleged against them as a crime! But there were uncomfortable facts concerning which they were by no means equally innocent, namely—that what might have been done to improve, or make amends for this uncouth exterior, was left undone; that, where they had it in their power to be clean and decently clad, they too often were dirty and in rags; that, where they had it in their power to maintain in their cottages a look of comfort and respectability, the squalor and wretchedness of their dwellings could be matched by no other homes in England; and that, where soap and schools were obtainable for their children, the wretched little urchins wallowed like pigs in the mud before the door, unclean, “unkemp’d,” and uncared for.

Among the many striking sights in a very striking region, nothing more attracted my wondering observation than the number of women who, early in the day, might be seen lounging at their doorways, sometimes with a dirty piece of knitting or crochet in their still dirtier hands; sometimes with the dirty hands minus the dirty knitting; and oh! sometimes (may the sex forgive the allusion) projecting from their mouths a clay pipe of vast dimensions, as though, forsooth, smoke were not sufficiently abundant in the neighbourhood without their contributions. I speak now of some few years ago, and possibly a change for the better has since taken place among the female portion of the community. Possibly the many efforts made on all sides for the good of the rising generation, have not been wholly without their effect upon the parents. If so, the quicker the improvement goes on, the better for all parties. Never, surely, was “woman’s influence” more talked about or appreciated than in the present day. Nowhere, surely, is it more needed than in the mining districts; but the influence of women with pipes in their mouths is, to say the least, not of a genial nature.

All this, however, begins to savour strongly of a discourse, and might do credit to Dr. Dryasdust, or Blackstone’s Commentaries; so I gladly turn from my own prosing to the company and conversation of my sister and Mrs. Barry. We encountered the two ladies on our return from the nuptial ceremony; and, as Mr. Barry had business in a distant part of the parish, it fell to my lot to be their willing escort home. His wife was prompt in her inquiry as to what I thought of “things in general;” and while perfectly agreeing with the philosopher, that there was “a great deal to be said on both sides,” could not but suggest in particular, that I regarded her as forming part of a very outlandish community. At this she laughed, and was “free to confess” that she and her neighbours were certainly not without their little imperfections and eccentricities.

“And now tell me,” I continued, “whether the good people here regale themselves all the year round on pigeon pie? Turn where I may, I en-

counter families and tribes of those amiable and respectable bipeds.”

“Ah,” said Lizzie, “you are touching now on a sore point; know that those amiable and respectable bipeds are the bane of our neighbourhood.”

“I suppose, then, they bet upon them? It struck me that there were generally knots of young men about them, sometimes watching their flight with most anxious faces.”

“Yes, you would really be astonished at the extent to which gambling is carried on in connection with those birds; you could hardly injure a young man’s character more than by calling him a pigeon-flyer; and it is a fact that when once they take to the amusement, they gradually lose all sense of duty or morality. It was only yesterday that a poor widow lodged a grievous complaint against her three sons: they had been the best lads in the world, she said, until they took to pleasuring, and now they were the plagues of her life. When ‘pleasuring’ came to be analysed, it embodied, as I anticipated, the occupation of flying pigeons.”

“Innocent looking creatures enough,” said Carry, as a fat patriarchal bird waddled across the road before us, “to be the cause of such a guilty commotion in the world.”

We were now passing through a portion of the parish which, in point of intense ugliness, certainly excelled any other to which we had before been introduced; though, mind you, that is saying a great deal. If the charge of having “one foot in the grave” could ever be admitted against a building made of brick, truly some of the tenements which presented themselves were not only in that lamentable situation, but to such a depth had the entrapped member sunk, that it seemed as though nothing short of a miracle could have prevented the entire structure from falling helpless on its side.

“This,” said Mrs. Barry, “this is the ‘Grove’ admire it, I beg.”

“Don’t smile, Lewis: I can tell you some other names which may astonish you a little more; the road which you and George walked down this morning began in the mountains of Lebanon, and ended in ‘Russell Square,’ which square consisted of one straight row before we reached the Grove.”

“Verdant spot,” said I.

“We passed through the ‘Crescent,’ having ‘Woodbine Terrace’ on our right, and ‘Damascus’ on the left. The ‘Hay Fields’ lie over there.”

“I should not have thought it,” said I.

“Another day I shall hope to show you ‘The Cedars,’ ‘Rosemary Lane,’ ‘Hebron,’ ‘Honeydew Cottages,’ ‘Myrtle Lodge,’ ‘Laburnum Terrace,’ ‘The Plain of Shinar,’ with various other places equally rural, romantic, and Biblio-historical.”

We both laughed heartily at names, now so ludicrously misapplied, but some of which, fifty years before, might well have represented the localities which at present they only mocked.

Carry now begged that Mrs. Barry would enlighten us as to some of the customs which she believed to be strictly local, or peculiar to the mining district in general.

"You know," I added, "that I mean to show you up one of these days!"

"So grateful of you!" she said; "but indeed I hardly know what could be called our local peculiarities; I believe, however, that what they called 'loosing in the New Year' is really confined to these regions."

Neither of us knew to what she alluded, so she went on: "The first New Year morning after our coming here, I was aroused from sleep by a sound of music and singing, which appeared to be almost in the room. I began to think it was some warning meant specially for me, and was just going to tell my husband I heard a 'voice he could not hear,' when a most supernatural rapping at the hall-door awakened him also. Then the singing went on with greater vigour than ever; and, as George said, they might rap all night before he would go to them. After one more thundering peal, they sung themselves to another house. We learnt afterwards that these kind people had come to introduce the infant year to our inhospitable dwelling; but, as we perversely refused to receive him, we had to be dependent on the kindly offices of milkman or postman. Neither of the servants would have stirred from the house, not even to the well in the garden, till the year had been let in after the approved manner; and, by not taking him when first offered, we exposed ourselves to the fearful chance of having a woman as its first presenter."

"Would that be thought unlucky?" said Carry.

"Oh, marvellously uncanny. Also, a man setting out for his morning work, would at any time think it a wretched omen if a woman happened to be the first person he met. Many a collier has turned back and taken another road, after descriing a daughter of Eve in the distance; and the wife of one who had met with an accident, told me the other day that it was so very unfortunate he had encountered a woman on his way to the works, and was too late to turn in another direction!"

"I am afraid," said I, "they have little sense of the sublime and beautiful."

"Apparently not much. Well, then, we have 'Mothering Sunday;' that I have heard of in other north-midland counties, but you know nothing about it. The fourth Sunday in Lent is here observed as almost a greater festival than Easter-day. Servants ask leave to visit their homes; married sons and daughters flock to their parents' houses; and all regale on roast veal and 'laid,' or, as we should call it, bread and butter pudding. The next day is also kept as a holiday, and called 'Fathering Monday.' Then we have 'Heaving Monday and Tuesday.' On Easter Monday and Tuesday there is rude play of the kind you may have seen in the Kentish hop grounds. 'Tossing in a blanket' would be mild treatment compared with the Black Country lifting. Tuesday is by far the greater heaving day of the two; the women are then the aggressors. It would amuse you to see great tall young men running as if for their lives. You had better not be in the way that day, Lewis. The masters and clerks hardly dare to visit the office, for it is

certain to be besieged, and it is by no means uncommon for a gentleman's horse to be stopped, while the rider is happy to escape his tormentors by the payment of a handsome bribe.

SMITHS' EXPRESS NEWSPAPER OFFICE.

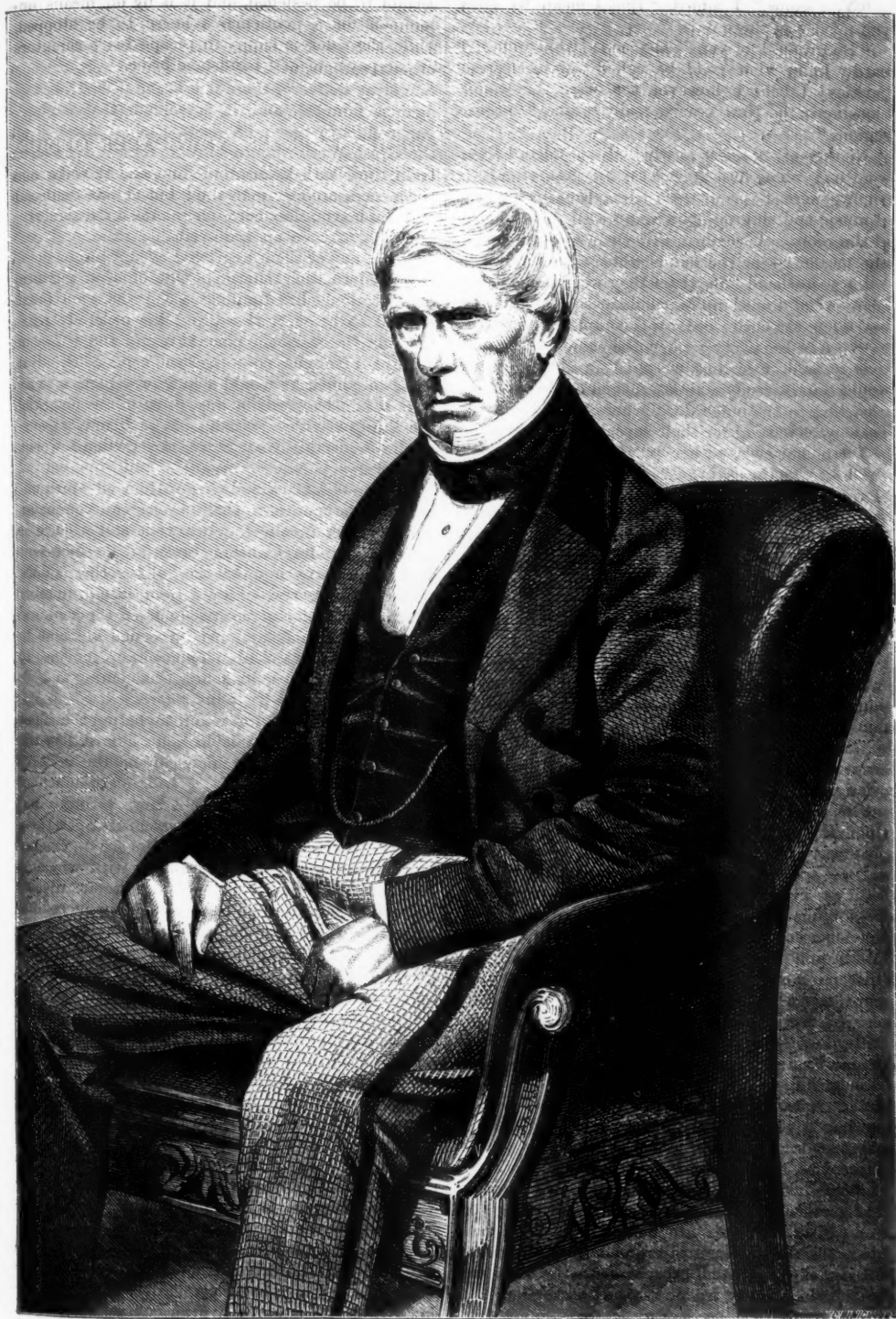
THERE are no skylarks in London, to wake one in the fine summer morning; but at 3.30 railroad time I am trudging through the deserted streets.

"The very horses seem asleep,
And all the mighty heart is lying still."

It is, indeed, the stillest period of this gigantic mass of life. The millions rest. Yet some must wake. There is a stir in a few isolated spots. They are the smallest of specks, and the action in them is the slightest of observable motions. But from these just visible and audible centres a voice is issuing, which will be heard, within a few brief hours, all over the British isles, and rapidly penetrate the utmost corners of the civilized world. Talk of magic, and spiritualism, and supernatural powers! What magic can create, what spiritualism can communicate, what powers can command, such wonders as this? And what and whence is it? Simply the Printing Press at its incessant toil! Some bits of metal are put together, a dark substance is distributed over their face, a number of wheels rotate, and the products of the soul and intellect of man are spread on wings of light to inform and instruct, to influence the opinions, to guide the footsteps, to shape the course, and to rule the conduct of the human race.

But why should I have been threading the silent streets at this unseasonable hour, almost like the "last man" wandering alone upon the solitary earth? I had an object. I had heard much of the newspaper establishment of Messrs. Smith and Son—of the extraordinary amount of its operations—of the marvellous dexterity of its arrangements—and of the facility and certainty with which it despatched a business of such infinite detail and enormous magnitude as to be altogether incredible without the conviction of ocular demonstration.

Possessing a courteous permission of entrance, I was duly at my post at four o'clock one Saturday morning, and even at that hour the bustle had begun. A large hall, forming all the back part of the extensive premises (behind the counting-houses), and surrounded by two galleries, was occupied by above a hundred and sixty men, either at the long tables or benches which run along the floor, or darting from post to pillar. The galleries were also filled by circles of most active coadjutors, from whom every now and then small parcels or reams of wet journals were showered upon the heads of claimants or clamants below. And it was this incessant clamour for supplies from every corner, and apparently addressed to nowhere, that struck me as the most remarkable feature of the labour. To witness perfect order emerge from such a scene of apparently utter confusion was like conjuring. Suppose twenty individuals scattered about at the tables making up packages of the newspapers, some almost too heavy to be lifted, and



H. Brougham

others perhaps consisting of not more than a quire or two; and suppose twenty voices to be uttering or bawling the words, "a hundred Times," "ten Fields," "three Eras," "twenty Telys" (Telegraphs), "fifteen Stars," "fifteen Standards," "four Presses," "three Armies," "three Critics," "two Gasses," "twenty Revs." (London), "seven Revs." (Sat.), "three Mists" (Economists), "two Worlds," "six Ill. News and six Ill. Times," etc.; and to such a babel, what was the reply? The flying about in all directions of the supplies still wanted, and their alighting upon the benches into the hands whence the vocal calls have proceeded! By them they were immediately disposed of, folded up into oblong square bundles; and when the entire order was completed according to a list before every packer, the same was by another prompt assistant wrapped in strong brown paper covers, ready addressed, then corded, and despatched to the outer door, where the light flying carts were waiting for their several cargoes.

I am, however, rather putting the cart before the horse, as the saying is. I ought to have stated that every ten or fifteen minutes the vehicles (conspicuously painted "Express Newspaper Office," with the proprietors' name and address), with piles of the "Times," had been driving rapidly up and down from Printing House Square with loads, as fast as they could be got from the machine, and first of all with the advertisement sheets of the supplement only, which are thrown off whilst the latest, or interior news sheets, are finishing for the press. Thus every "Times" paper requires two manipulations in folding for transmission to its destination.

Contemporaneously, tracks and porters are delivering deposits of other journals; and how they are arranged, so as to be readily hurled about in the manner I have described, does vast credit to the multifarious arrangement of this extraordinary system. Men staggering in under heavy burdens, and others going out with packages of all sizes, look as if inextricably complicated, and yet the whole is perfect order. The outgoing find the conveyances for the different Northern, Great Western, South Eastern, etc. stations, waiting for their freight under the superintendence of a manager, who has all their hours of starting marked, and all the number of parcels that are to be sent to them. His charge is a very important one, and calculated to minutes. The time necessary for the transit from the Strand office to the rail runs nearly as close as a horse-race. Where needed, in consequence of streets being paved, or obstacles from buildings, or laying down gas or water pipes, or any other interruption of the right of way, previous surveys are made, routes changed, and farther time allowed, as the case may be. Sometimes outriders are sent to clear off such hindrances as London is exposed to from locks of market carts, wagons, cabs, and all the interruptions of its mighty traffic; that is, as the morning advances, for the earliest despatches up to six o'clock are little likely to fall in with aught in the way before them. In this work sixty horses are employed, and their sleek condition does credit to

their feed and efficiency. Should any of them have galloped away on their errand to Paddington, Euston Square, London Bridge, King's Cross, or other terminus, without being able to wait for some late stray delivery, there is a brave pedestrian race against minutes, and it is seldom that a single paper fails to reach its destination. At 5.30 all the Great Westerns are *en route* for the six o'clock train, the North Westerns follow, and the others in succession, according to the intermediate distances and the hours. In short, every man does his duty; and it would be an indescribable mess and confusion if any of them neglected even a minor detail intrusted to their charge. One chief superintendent overlooked and animated the whole. His eye seemed to be everywhere, and his orders to reach the four corners of the place at once; and, if he had the eyes of Argus, so he had the arms of Briareus, for, at a pinch, he would step forward and put his own hands to expedite any piece of work which the hurry of the case demanded. There were no hitches under his comprehensive vision and prompt example.

By five o'clock, the absolute whirl all about the spectator is enough to excite that sort of giddiness which is felt in a factory where a complication of steam and endless wheels are at fight, only here it is the human agency that is getting through the wonderful task, and with a degree of steady speed which is difficult to reconcile with the nature and amount of the labour. And so good-humouredly too. Everybody looked as if almost at play—jocund, laughing at petty contretemps, and joking at awkward mishaps, and their instant remedies. It was an excellent sign of the relations between masters and men. I should not look for a strike, hardly for a dismissal, in this admirably-conducted establishment.

Sometimes the "Times" cannot be furnished fast enough for the earliest trains, and you hear the order "half Times," or "a third Times" issued to the packers, thus limiting the first transmissions, while at the same time "Posts," "Chronicles," "Heralds," "Daily News," pour in, and bales after bales are disposed of with astonishing celerity and accuracy; the galleries continuing their sleight-of-hand evolutions, and the parties below making exceedingly short work with the goods thus provided for them. Cart after cart is filled from the back, the driver is already mounted, the folding-doors are slammed to, the word is given, and away rattles the carriage, just to be two or three minutes within that limit when the inexorable whistle tells that, but for this punctuality, it would have been too late. Few can form an adequate notion of the inconvenience and disappointment that would be created by the misadventure of one of Messrs. W. H. Smith and Son's bright red carts.

A partial interregnum ensues, and advantage is taken of it for the discussion of hot, hearty breakfasts—tea, coffee, cocoa, rolls, etc.—which are swallowed while a reduced activity in arranging goes on.

The earlier morning trains have been fed—so have the men and boys—and a second act follows, similar to, though not quite so stirring, nor requir-

ing such energetic exertion, as the first. To the repetition, however, is superadded, upstairs, the folding of thousands of single papers for the post. But as this is the same operation as is practised at the publication offices of the widely-circulated journals, I will not enter into particulars. The stupendousness of the effort, and the effect of the production, are the great elements which impress themselves on the mind; and perhaps the most gratifying conclusion from the result is the intense satisfaction derived from the view of well-deserving individual enterprise meeting with its just recompense, while its contributive stream flows on to swell the great flood-tide of national wealth, prosperity, and power. It is one of those centres which the spirit of the age calls into being, consistently with progressive development. A free and cheap press—the diffusion and demand for information—the growth of intelligence in a popular sense—the facilities for intercommunication among all classes of the community, combine to dwarf old methods and customs, and to render new plans, inventions, and extensions necessary. And the country must rejoice to witness, in every branch of its commerce, some of its people rise with the occasion, and, to use a hackneyed phrase, show themselves masters of their situations. Setting aside the electric wire as unapproachable by any other mortal device ever brought into action, it is still marvellous to think that words spoken in Parliament are within two hours rolling from the printing-press in indelible characters, conveyed under excellent arrangements to an establishment so skilfully organized as this of Messrs. Smith, and thence within other two hours committed to the pressure of steam, and spread with incredible rapidity over the limits of the British isles. One hundred miles from the capital, at eight o'clock, country residents are perusing the most important utterances which transpired there only five hours before, and the most recent news from every quarter of the globe are an immediate and daily portion of their common enjoyments.

—On this Saturday morning, a hundred and twenty thousand public journals were, between four and nine o'clock, thus transmitted to a hundred and nine railway stations, agreeably to a list published for Messrs. Smiths' Subscription Library. All the day long the posting of journals is continued, and the preparations are going forward for the morning effort. The wrappers are addressed and laid in order. I counted fifty or sixty individuals thus employed at noon, and on the evenings of Friday an immense number of what are called Saturday and Sunday papers (though circulated beforehand) are disposed of by the rail; and every day, more or less, according to the times of publication, there is an endless flow from this source to irrigate the land (if I may so express myself) with torrent rapidity, wherever the thirst for intelligence exists. The commanding position of the "Times" secures for it (I believe through some contract with Messrs. Smith) the accommodation of sale at all their railway book-stalls, at the price of fourpence, as daily notified in that journal; others, I fancy, must risk provincial agencies and

news-venders, in the usual old fashion of agreement. But

I opened my eyes,
And I asked with surprise—

"Are no 'Leisure Hours,' no 'Sundays at Home,' no 'All the Year Rounds,' no 'Once a Weeks' sold out of London?" "Oh, yes," was the response; "but they come within the category of books, and are sent with all the new works in Library Parcels."

I procured a catalogue, and, to my astonishment, found that, in addition to the gigantic undertaking, the management and direction of which I had just witnessed, this firm had established a circulating library in connection with their numerous railway bookstalls, with a continual change of books free from charge beyond the subscription; and that, in fact, readers living three hundred miles off were, by means of their machinery and capabilities, made next door neighbours, for accommodation, to Paternoster Row. And I said to myself, "When will wonders cease? Here is another of the gratifying examples of the best spirit of the age."

THE PUZZLES OF PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ENGLISHWOMAN IN AMERICA."

UNTIL the middle of November, when the presidential election will be held, America will continue in an ever-increasing frenzy of excitement. The election of a chief magistrate is in itself important; but mammon enters into the contest, for 22,000 offices, with their lawful gains and unlawful spoils, may change occupants with the election, from the white-haired minister who represents the genius of republicanism at St. James's, to the semi-barbarian post-master who dispenses letters and corn spirit in the western wilds. It is not an unfitting time for the heir of the mightiest of earth's monarchies to witness the working of republican institutions. The "nominations" are over, and the contest has begun. To the partial exclusion even of dollars, the election is the all-engrossing topic of conversation. The country is divided into hostile camps. "Wide-awake" and other clubs for electioneering purposes are formed everywhere; popular orators "stump" every State, and rave about the American eagle; "mass meetings" are held in monster "wigwams" and in the open air; torch-light processions, two miles in length, parade the cities, with bands of music and yells of triumph and defiance; huge flags from countless committee-rooms are hung across the streets; the air is filled with the sounds of national music, the roar of guns, and the ravings of frenzied orators; expectants of thousands of government offices raise the ardour of faction to furnace heat; the whole nation throbs with excitement; "campaign" journals start into being; the papers run wild; language loses its meaning, and all ordinary forms are broken through. The frenzy is focussed at New York, which is kept alive during the torrid heat of this season by campaign orations, the ravings of

"Tammany Hall," the doings of the "Empire Club," and the roar of Marshal Rynders's gun. "Union-saving" speeches and threats of disunion abound on all sides, and, to a superficial observer, the unwieldy republic may seem on the verge of severance.

Now all this is nothing but a chaos to most readers; and the American news in the "Times" is "confusion worse confounded," owing mainly to the singular and often unmeaning nomenclature of political parties. A person looking into the letters of an American special correspondent is puzzled by the terms "Democrat, Republican, Know-nothings," and, after querying what choice of evils lies between "Democrat" and "Republican," is reluctantly compelled to class himself with the "Know-nothings." He is disgusted as well as mystified by the barbarous jargon of any American paper to which he turns for aid, when he finds men classed as "South Americans, Old Line Whigs, Federalists, Garrisonians, Hunkers, Hard Shells, Soft Shells, National Unionists, Loco-focos," etc. In reality, the grand features of American politics are very simple, and we shall offer such explanations of their apparent complexity as will enable our readers to take an intelligent interest in the coming quadrennial crisis. These numerous erratic designations apply merely to sections of the two great parties, the Democratic and the Republican, and to the multifarious components of the "Constitutional Union" party. They may therefore be disregarded, as the contest lies between the Democrats and Republicans, each aided or embarrassed by the Constitutional Unionists.

The *Democratic* party, which, in 1856, elected Buchanan, until recently was united and compact, and is very powerful. It can command nearly the whole south, and is by no means feeble in the north and west. It has conservative traditions, hereditary influence, and a large share of ability. Its policy is strictly defined, and its organization complete. Its aims (some of which are partially carried out) are to acquire Mexico for new slave states, to conquer or buy Cuba, to abolish every geographical limit to slavery, to carry slavery into the territories by means of the "Dred Scott" decision, to procure a congressional code to protect it from the "unfriendly legislation" of territorial legislatures, and to make the executive power the instrument of pro-slavery aggression. It is the *pro-slavery* party, and is honest in the avowal of its tactics. Three months ago it broke into two parts, and the *ultra slavery* portion nominated as its presidential candidate Vice-President Breckenridge, while the more moderate section, composed principally of the northern democracy, selected Judge Douglas. This division of course is a cause of weakness.

The *Republican* party, which, in 1856, ran Colonel Fremont for the presidency, has neither traditions nor inheritance, and a very recent organization. It is based upon the principles of freedom laid down in the constitution, and expounded by Washington and Jefferson; and it had its origin in the alarm felt at the encroachments of the slave power. Its policy is to restore the geographical limits of

slavery, and keep it within them, and to oppose the aggressions of the slave-owners on the free States and territories of the Union. It numbers in its ranks a large proportion of the aspiring and enthusiastic youth of the northern States. It is eminently constitutional and conservative, and its aims must not be confounded with those of the extreme Abolitionists. Its strength lies in the western and northern States, especially in New England. It has lately largely increased in power, both in and out of Congress, and is recognised as the constitutional Anti-slavery party of the United States. It has unanimously nominated Abram Lincoln, or "Honest Old Abe," as he is usually called, for its presidential candidate.

The American, or Know-nothing party, which nominated Fillmore in 1856, rose, a few years ago, with the object of excluding foreigners from exercising the elective franchise for twenty-one years after their arrival. It is now a comparatively small third party in the Free States, and its only reliable popular strength is in two or three of the northern Slave States. It has recently effected a temporary fusion between South Americans, Old Line Whigs, Conservatives, etc., and the resulting conglomerate is called the "*Constitutional Union Party*." It has nominated Mr. Bell, of Tennessee, as its presidential candidate, but it has no defined platform on public questions.

The "tug of war" will be over early in November, and up to the very day of election it would be unsafe to predict results. The real conflict is between north and south on the battle-ground of slavery, and the magnitude of the issue can hardly be over-estimated. There will be much talk about disunion, but we have little fear of it at present. The north has no desire for severance, and the south has "axes to grind" still at Washington.

HIGHLAND SPORTS.

It was my good fortune in 1855, after taking my degree at Oxford, to spend some time in one of the finest parts of Perthshire, and to have the range of a very considerable tract of country abounding in all sorts of game. A few recollections of that time may be interesting to lowland readers. We stopped for a day on our way northwards, to explore the quaint old city of York, with its glorious minster, and lingered for some weeks among the beauties of Edinburgh, "the modern Athens," which I shall not attempt to describe. Suffice it to say that we did not omit to climb to the top of Arthur's Seat before breakfast, and were well repaid by the view. Sir Walter Scott (no mean authority) used to say that, of all the streets he had seen in Europe, he knew none that surpassed Princes Street, Edinburgh, excepting the High Street at Oxford. Pursuing our journey, the railway took us past the Bridge of Allan, Bannockburn, and Stirling, as far as Perth, from whence we posted up the country in open barouches. We soon found ourselves among the Highlands and their Gaelic inhabitants, whose dwellings, appearance, and speech were quite novel to most of us. Passing Scone, with its historical

associations, and Birnam Wood, well known to every reader of "Macbeth," we devoted a day or two to "fair Dunkeld," with its half ruined cathedral and its surpassingly beautiful neighbourhood. Perhaps the thing most to be remembered was the Rumbling Brig (bridge) in Strath Braan. Keeping up the form of a stirrup-cup, in a sip of the renowned "Atholl brose," we resume our course; past Grandtully, the original of Sir Walter's "Tullyveolan" in "Waverley;" past the Falls of Moness and the Birks of Aberfeldy, celebrated by Burns,* we follow the course of the silver Tay, till we trace it to its romantic home. Our destination is in Strathsay, and the four steaming greys soon dash through the park gates of Castle M., the ancestral seat of the improvident chief of that ilk. Here we are to seek health and recreation for the next three months; and, sooth to say, the appliances thereto are not wanting.

Strathsay is a lovely valley, several miles long and one broad, formed by two parallel ranges of heathy and partially wooded hills. On the slope of one of these ranges stands our abode, a large, massive, and irregular pile of grey stone, surmounted by a waving flag. Before it lies the park, and behind it the spacious gardens and hot-houses, with a quadrangle of stables and kennels. Behind these again rises a wall of dense wood, broken here and there by jutting masses of heath-crowned rock. The valley is full of green crops, which promise well for partridges hereafter. Along the foot of the opposite hills runs the Tay, which issues a few miles higher up from the loch of the same name. And in this river and in its tributary the Lyon, which rises a little way up the country in the Glenlyon, we have six miles of capital fishing.

"This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses."

Our territory adjoined on one side the splendid domain of the Marquis of Breadalbane at Taymouth Castle, and on the other reached nearly to that of the Duke of Atholl at Blair Castle; and with both of these great potentates courtesies were from time to time exchanged. Lord Breadalbane, however he may look at court as Lord High Chamberlain, is not very aristocratic in his costume or appearance on his own domain, and tells good-humouredly a story of his being mistaken in his own park for a cattle-drover. But his estates include whole regions of Central Scotland, as do the Duke of Sutherland's in the north. They would cut up into several German principalities; for it is said that Lord Breadalbane could travel for a hundred miles in a straight line without putting his foot off his own land. But his title and property will pass away to a "Scotch cousin," who is now only plain Mr. Campbell. "Sic transit gloria mundi:" and so true is it that man

"heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

The view of Taymouth from Kenmore is well described by Burns:—

"Admiring Nature in her wildest grace,
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
The abode of covied grouse and timid sheep,
My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
Till famed Breadalbane opens to my view.
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
The woods, wild scattered, clothe their ample sides;
The outstretching lake, embosomed mid the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;
The Tay, meandering sweet in infant pride,
The palace, rising on its verdant side;
The lawns, wood-fringed in nature's native taste,
The hillocks, dropped in nature's careless haste;
The arches, striding o'er the new-born stream,
The village, glittering in the noontide beam;
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods,
The incessant roar of headlong trembling floods;—
Poetic ardours in my bosom swell,
Lone wandering by the hermit's mossy cell."

But, after all, "description cannot suit itself in words."

We proceed in the first place to test the fishing, which proves quite equal to its reputation, and affords excellent sport for some time. Rod and net are busily plied, both in river and loch, to the sore-discomfiture and ultimate decease of sundry fine salmon, grilse, trout, pike, eels, and perch. When we hit on the right fly to please those fastidious gentry the trout, three of us sometimes land sixty or seventy in the course of the morning. And people are to be pitied who know not what it is to breakfast on salmon outlets of their own catching.

But, the shooting is our main object. The grouse are safe till the twelfth of August, many of them being as yet only "cheepers." So we decide on a foray against the mountain hares, which the keepers report to be very numerous and troublesome. They are thoroughbred caterans, the mountain hares, like their countrymen the Highlanders of old; descending in troops from their fastnesses by night, and committing sad havoc among the farmers' crops. They are smaller than the lowland hare, and not nearly so good eating, the flesh being lean and dry. They are blue in summer and white in winter, and half and half by the time we took leave of them in the autumn.

At early dawn we mount our stout shooting-ponies and ascend the ridge behind the castle. We are attended by a posse of keepers and gillies, another batch having gone on before. Emerging from the wood, we come upon an undulating expanse of moor, of about nine thousand acres, clothed with purple heather, varied with rising grounds which in England would pass for hills, intersected by gulleys and rippling burns, and full of grouse. Across this, in clear relief against the blue morning sky and at a distance of several miles, is the rugged outline of a chain of high and rocky hills, beautifully diversified by light and shade: and those hills are to be the scene of operations. Arrived at their foot, we send back the ponies in charge of a groom, and climb to the top, each armed with a double-barrelled Parday. Our numbers varied at different times from

* The braes ascend, like lofty wa's,
The foamy stream deep-roaring fa's,
O'erhung with fragrant spreading shaws,
The Birks of Aberfeldy.

The hoary cliffs are crowned with flowers,
White o'er the huns the burnie pours,
And rising, wets with misty showers
The Birks of Aberfeldy.

two to ten guns, according to the size of the party staying at the house. The mountain hares when alarmed immediately make for the crags, where they take refuge like rabbits in holes and crannies. We take our measures accordingly. Each sportsman (sometimes alone, and sometimes with a keeper to load and carry his second gun) quietly occupies a spur of rock commanding some likely defile. The gillies meantime have been forming an extended line, one end of which rests on the base of the hills, while the other stretches far out into the boggy moor. They are under the command of old Hugh the hill-watcher, who joined us at the little "bothy" half-way up the ascent. When we are all ready, the signal is given, and the row of beaters slowly advances in a direction parallel with the line of hills. The scene as we move along the heights is most animated and exciting; but it requires no little activity and exertion to keep up with the beaters below. Up and down ravines, now on a patch of springy mountain turf and now on a projecting crag, we scramble along, firing as we go at the hares, which are scudding in all directions. After some hours, a truce is proclaimed. We halt round some bubbling spring, where the provision-pony has been ordered to meet us. We are fully prepared to do justice to the manifold good things which appear, as we had only a bannock and a cup of milk before starting. These pic-nic luncheon-breakfasts were equally pleasant and picturesque. Stretched by the side of a sparkling rill, in some soft and shady nook, we were busily occupied in satisfying the hunger produced by the exercise in the keen mountain air, and in comparing notes of our success. The keepers and gillies formed another group close at hand. After about an hour's rest we renew the war, and as the afternoon wanes we turn our steps homeward in time to dress for dinner; putting up coveys of grouse as we go, and chatting over the morning's adventures. At the close of one of these field days we counted our hares by scores, to the great joy of the farmers in the valley. The beaters were rewarded in kind, each getting a hare for his day's work, which however he seemed to enjoy as much as any of us, being "to the manner born." Even after this deduction, there would be enough left to supply the household with hares and hare-soup, till even the servants got tired of eating it. All this, however, was merely a sort of prelude to the grouse-shooting.

On the morning of the twelfth of August, and for some days afterwards, we were on the moors by four o'clock A.M., and were out for twelve hours. At the end of the first week, we found we had walked 100 miles, had been out fifty hours, and had shot 350 head of game, a large part of which was duly distributed far and near, and, we trust, thankfully received. It is amazing to find what an amount of exercise one can take in the Highlands without feeling fatigued. The pure mountain breezes have almost the effect of laughing-gas, which is probably due to that mysterious agent, ozone. We used to think nothing of following the dogs day after day for twenty miles, carrying our guns over hills, through heather, and across bogs. It would not be easy to do this day after day in a lowland atmo-

sphere: "the spirit of the hills," says Ruskin, "is action, and that of the lowlands repose." We thus laid in a rare stock of health, our best justification for thus spending our time.

[To be continued.]

THE DAHOMIANS AND ASHANTEES.

A BIT of intelligence from Western Africa lately arrived, which many regarded as startling news, but which, in fact, happens to be no news at all. It is a mere reiteration of a stale subject, relating to nothing more than a common-place matter *there*, that is very offensive to our susceptibilities *here*, and we don't like to hear of it. We are told that "His majesty Baddahung, king of Dahomy, is about to make the 'grand custom' in honour of the late king Gezo. Determined to surpass all former monarchs in the magnitude of the ceremonies to be performed on this occasion, Baddahung has made the most extensive preparations for the celebration of the 'grand custom'."

Well, there sounds no harm in this. We have our grand customs, anniversaries, and ceremonies. There is something charming, too, in celebrating, in a public festival, the memory of a great man, and that man a king. But the statement proceeds as follows:—"A great pit has been dug, which is to contain human blood enough to float a canoe. Two thousand persons will be sacrificed on this occasion. The expedition to Abbeokuta has been postponed, but the king has sent his army to make some excursions at the expense of weaker tribes, and has succeeded in capturing many unfortunate creatures. The young people among these prisoners will be sold into slavery, and the old people will be killed at the 'great custom!'"

And this, be it observed, is an *annual* "custom." I have stated that it has been going on for many years. I will tell you, good reader, presently, how many years I have traced it as a matter of certainty; and though the magnitude of the ceremonies in matters of detail may perhaps be surpassed in the present instance, I undertake to say that it will fall short in the number of victims on some former occasions, if limited to 2000.

But let us first see in what part of Africa these grand "customs" are, as far as we know, *exclusively* practised. If we trace the direction of the western shores of the continent from the northward, we find it inclining towards the south-east in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone, till within the fifth and sixth degrees from the equator. It here turns more directly eastward, and pursues a tortuous course for nearly a thousand miles before it again curves round to the southward towards the Cape of Good Hope, and forms that extensive embayed region named the Bight of Benin. On this line of coast our earliest African settlement is identified with that portion of it known as the "Gold Coast," and we here exercise a sort of protectorate over the neighbouring tribes, considerably beyond our legitimate jurisdiction, or the limits of the territory we claim under the name of "Cape Coast Castle." With the two prominent exceptions

in the people whose national designation we have given at the head of this paper, nearly the whole of the maritime districts of this extensive range of country is inhabited by numerous distinct tribes, forming petty oligarchies or patriarchal states, and generally exhibiting that restless licentiousness incident to the frequent recurrence of desolating wars, and rendered more degraded still by the insidious influence of a grovelling superstition, and the demoralizing intercourse they have so long sustained with Europeans and Americans. But this revolting aspect of humanity is not to be wholly ascribed to the natural instincts or habits of the people, or to the demoralizing influence of the slave trade. I am speaking now with some personal knowledge of Africa and the Africans. We behold, in truth, in these scattered tribes, in the wide-spread tokens of towns devastated or deserted, and in the extensive fertile tracts laid waste, the debris of several long-settled communities forming "states," known and spoken of by Europeans as "important centres of great trade with the interior," within the period of a century from the present time; and nature herself, at the passing moment, confirms the testimony given of the former prosperity and fruitfulness of the country.

Dahomy was not known to us, even by name, at the commencement of the last century, when the slave trade was unrestricted, and the avenues of general commerce and intercourse with the natives had been open to Europeans for upwards of two centuries, and we had held Cape Coast Castle upwards of fifty years; and yet it was within only a few days' journey from the coast, with only two independent states intervening, and with several lines of communication open to traders with the interior. Of these two states, with the coast for their southern boundary, as will be seen in the accompanying map, one was known to us as the "flourishing kingdom of Whydah," the other adjoining it and extending further inland, as the "kingdom of Ardra," whose people had so far advanced in intelligence as to be able to correspond with each other after the manner of the Peruvians. At this time also, the Eyeos, a numerous warlike people to the north-east of Dahomy, with a formidable army of cavalry, had long claimed supremacy over the regions between themselves and the sea, and had recently possessed themselves of Ardra, on an appeal from the Ardranese against the tyranny of their chief.

But at this period there lived one of those extraordinary men who, whether for good or evil, whether among the civilized or the savage, come into the world to mark an era in the history of their race. This man, by name Guadja Trudo, was then king of Dahomy, and in 1727 he not only claimed to be known to us with as good a title of a hero or conqueror as any barbarian that was ever dignified with the appellation, but he claimed also for his descendants and their subjects the hideous notoriety they have so well sustained to the present hour. Animated by a crafty and savage ambition, this monster, in the year named, suddenly invaded with an overwhelming force the two states of Ardra and

Whydah, committing the most horrible cruelties upon the inhabitants, reducing to desolation the most beautiful country then known to us in Western Africa, and successfully extending his dominions to the sea coast. During the brief remnant of his reign, he carried misery and desolation into other states. He died in 1731, and was succeeded by his son Bossa Ahadee, who possessed the same restless ambitious spirit, though with less of the martial talents of his father.

It was some years later, however, before we became acquainted with the true character of the Dahomian government and people, and with the celebration of these "grand customs" on and after the death of Trudo. But that they existed before his time, we have evidence incidentally conveyed to us in a speech of Ahadee's successor, addressed to one of our governors of Cape Coast Castle. How awful the reflection, then, that during the one hundred and twenty-nine years that have elapsed since 1731, *two hundred and fifty-eight thousand* human victims have been sacrificed at these "grand customs," even if we take the lowest computation of two thousand annually, though they have frequently exceeded that number. And yet, this is only an item in the account from that date alone; other sacrifices of a more *impromptu* character are constantly occurring throughout the year, at the mere whim or caprice of the "king," and in which his own subjects are also the victims.* My limited space, however, precludes a recital of the circumstances which commonly call for them; and it compels me also to dispose of Bossa Ahadee with credit, after a long reign, for nearly as much mischief of the same character as that committed by his paternal predecessor. He also was succeeded by his son Adahoonzou, and with *his* "walk through blood to the throne," according to "custom," we arrive at the end of the last century.

There is one feature, however, in the government of this state that we must not pass over: a large portion of its army, including the king's body-guard, is composed of *women*! and, strange as it may seem, so far from this service being repugnant to them, or its imposition the effect of despotic rule, they have quite a passion for it, although they are bound to perpetual celibacy and chastity, under the penalty of death. They are regularly trained to the use of arms under generals and subordinate officers of their own sex; parade in public with their standards, drums, trumpets, and martial music, and perform their military evolutions with as great dexterity as any of the Dahomian troops. Animated, moreover, by their love of "glory" and their attachment to their

* Conceive this "horrid king"—and, in speaking of him, we for brevity sake speak also of his neighbouring ally, the king of ASHANTEE—conceive him indulging in the notion that he is in constant communication with his deceased father, or other relative, and whenever he wishes to "consult" him, or convey to him a message, he sends for one of his ablest messengers, and having delivered to him his errand, coolly chops off his head. Conceive him, also, the next moment perhaps, recollecting something that he had forgotten; in which case another messenger is sent for, and despatched in like manner, and probably with strict injunctions that he "make haste and endeavour to overtake the preceding messenger." In conceiving this, good reader, you will simply conceive a reality of frequent occurrence.

sovereign, they are the most furious in battle. When Gezo, the late king, so recently as March, 1851, attacked Abbeokuta with a force estimated at 10,000, the "Amazonian" division comprised six thousand of the number.

But what of the Ashantees? What if, for the sake of brevity, we say, let the foregoing particulars of the Dahomians represent them and their career; their sacrifices a reduplication of the others! We shall not be far from correct. Their State also, though only at a trifling distance further from the coast, had remained concealed from our knowledge to a still more recent date.* In like manner, the maritime districts of Aquamboe, Dinkira, and other "powerful states" intervened between it and the sea; and it was not until 1808 that we were "startled" into an acquaintance with it, precisely after the fashion of the Dahomians. In that year these states had yielded to the desolating inroads of the Ashantees, who, with a force of 15,000 warriors, now entered the territories of the Fantees in the very vicinity of our settlements, laying waste the country with fire and sword, routing and putting to death a body of 9000 Fantees who had rallied near the British fort of Anamaboe, and then attacking the fort itself, in which a few of the Fantees had sought protection. Here, however, they were repulsed with considerable slaughter. In 1811, and again in 1816, they made similar incursions; and in 1817 we honoured them with a special embassy to "propitiate"—what? it is the diplomatic phrase, good reader, we employed on the occasion—to propitiate their favour—of course on behalf of humanity and commerce; and to discover, in the peculiar character of their government and policy,

in their "grand customs," and in their steadfast adherence to the doctrine of "passive obedience and the divine right of kings," their remarkable resemblance to their neighbours the Dahomians. His Majesty of Ashantee had just sacrificed on the grave of his mother *three thousand* human victims, two thousand of whom were Fantee prisoners. We nevertheless concluded a treaty. But in January, 1824, the Ashantees having again entered the Fantee territory with a force of 15,000 men, our authorities on the coast interposed, and Sir Charles McCarthy hastened from Sierra Leone to take command of the small force we could collect to repel them. Ill informed as to the strength of the enemy, he met them with scarcely a thousand British, and was deserted by the native auxiliaries in the action; from neglect and confusion he found himself without a needful supply of powder, and, surrounded by his savage enemies, he was taken prisoner, and his whole force perished on the field or underwent the more cruel fate of captivity in the hands of the victors. Three officers, and they wounded, alone escaped to tell the dreadful tale. The head of Sir Charles McCarthy was severed from his body immediately after his capture. Thus perished one of the best of men, and certainly the best Governor of Sierra Leone, where his name is still revered.

The philosopher, the statesman, the philanthropist, and the christian have in these sad records much food for reflection. Truly "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." While every political and commercial influence should be brought to bear, our main hope for Africa must be in the spread of that Gospel which, through the Divine power, in other lands, once as degraded as Dahomy, has broken the reign of superstition and crime.

* It now, with its conquered territories, adjoins that of Dahomy, to the left in our map, its capital, Comassi, lying N.N.E. of Cape Coast Castle.

